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Violence and its extremity to Mariticide discussed in the novels: *Wife* by Bharati Mukherjee
and *Cry the peacock* by Anita Desai

Abstract: Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee, diaspora writers of the repute penned several novels picturing the themes of sufferings of women, family relationship, cultural chaos and quest of identity. The main difference in their writings is that Anita Desai portrays impeccable Indianness in most of her characters whereas Bharati's characters are of varieties. The nexus between the writers is that they display Indian aura and explore the real female psyche in their characters. Anita Desai's motivating force behind her writing skill includes D H Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, as their works provided a reflection for her thoughts. Bharati's role model aligns with V.S.Naipaul and Bernard Malmaud, as their works reveal the sufferings of immigrants in alien land. This article focuses on the comparison between Anita's "Cry the peacock"(1963) and Bharati's "Wife"(1975), as both the works display the life of female protagonists after their marriage, their unfulfilled wishes which leads to a grim murder of their husbands and 'the term mariticide literally refers to the killing of one's husband'.(wikipedia)

Key words: themes- female psyche- sufferings of immigrants- unfulfilled wishes

Anita Desai, one of the influential and matured writers of Indian fiction emphasizes the theme of inner self, which acts as a propelling force in the portrayal of her characters. Desai's characters differs from other writers as she probes into the dark interiors of female psyche and concludes her works in a thrilling manner. Anxiety and anguish are dominant forces in her fiction. Her characters are usually lonely characters and they pass through several tumults in the sojourn of life. All her male characters are rational and logical whereas her female characters possess extra ordinary vigour and are emotional. This novel, "Cry the peacock" is mainly concerned with the theme of marital discord between Gautama and his wife Maya. It portrays the inner emotional world of the protagonist Maya, her mental upheavals, inner struggles, desire for warmth, love and companionship and the obsession with death. Mukherjee's Wife also deals with the theme of a unhappy marriage and its horrifying consequence leading to extra marital affair, the acts of suicide and murder.

Maya, the central character in 'Cry the peacock' is prophesized by an astrologer that she or her husband would die in the fourth year of their marriage. She marries Gautama, who is known to her from her childhood and she wants to enjoy life. Gautama as his name connotes with Gautama Buddha keeps astray from carnal desires. He keeps himself busy in his profession. Dimple, the protagonist of 'wife' dreams to marry neuro surgeons or architects. She fantasized that 'marriage would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpeted lawns ,fund-raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her love'(3), but she marries a chemical engineer, Amit Basu. Amit aim to fly abroad in order to earn money and luxurious life. Dimple accompanies her husband to America. Both the female characters face trauma as life becomes a failure shattering their dreams. Dimple wishes and craves for a new life in America as she gets totally perturbed due to Amit's family members.

Both the husbands of Maya and Dimple maintain a high self-esteem in the society and family circle, which makes them to focus on their career . In the four years of marriage

,Maya and Gautama fail to understand each other whereas Amit has much love for Dimple, his lack of expression instills a negative vibe in her. As married women, their desires remain as an unsatisfying factor, which transforms them to vengeful personalities. Gautama neither understands her wishes nor wishes her to enter his world. Thus on his view, 'understanding was scant, love was meagre'(93). Amit on the other hand gets pre occupied searching for a job in America. From the masculine point of view, the element of care is seen in both the men, but their inability to express the love becomes their flaw. For instance, Gautama convinces Maya, when her pet dog Toto dies and assures for a new dog, but that consolation rather creates irritation to Maya. Amit pacifies Dimple, whenever she is upset, 'he promised her a trip to Calcutta by charter flight though he hated to part with five hundred dollars'(181).

The female characters are interestingly charming in both the novels and they become the center of attraction. Maya looking the mirror states that everyone loves to see her face except Gauthama. Comparing, Dimple is liked by the men in the parties that she attends with her husband. Vinod khanna, a reputed entrepreneur in the party approaches her and asks her she can join his shop, when she gets bored at home. Furthermore, Dimple treads one step further than Maya engaging in an extra marital affair with Milt Glasser. Milt is Dimple's house owner i.e., Marsha's brother. Dimple gets attracted to him on the very first sight. His good physique makes her to fall for him. 'He was very muscular, especially in the legs which came from basket-ball... Amit was hairy on the face and not at all muscular'(197). Whereas, Maya is obsessed with childhood prophecy of death after her marriage and Anita Desai connects the plot with the title *Cry the Peacock* that peacock enjoys its life utmost dancing and mating before its death. Even Maya loves to die like a peacock. 'when they gaze at the clouds loaded with water, they cry out of pain, pia, pia, lover, lover, mia, mia, I die, I die'(82). Dimple on the other hand wishes to commit suicide and discovers seven ways on how to commit suicide effectively.

Both the protagonists love to enjoy their lives. Maya loves to speak about physical pleasures to her friends. Her expectations become high after her marriage. She wants Gautama to be highly active but the latter talks about Gita and legal clients. Dimple from the beginning of the plot believes that marriage endows her freedom and craves for marriage. To make herself fit, she tries various herbal practices to enrich her beauty. Her mom advises her to go for 'prebath mustard oil massages, ground almond and honey packs, ping pong, homeopathic pills and prayers to Lord Shiva, the Divine Husband'(5). Like Maya, Dimple wants her life to be highly sensual but gets disappointed as Amit busies himself settling in a comfortable job in America.

A transitional shift from a sane to insane is witnessed in the characters when their expectations shatter. Both the novels present the grimness, stillness, seclusion in the role of the protagonists. Dimple and Maya, both of them ponder about various ways to commit suicide but the catastrophe is something different. Both of them, childless, drown in the world of loneliness. Though Gautama's mother and sister support her, Maya feels alone. Though Dimple attends parties, makes friends with Ina and Milt, safeguarded by Amit, solitariness encompasses her. Maya sticks to Indian soil whereas Dimple leaves for America. She gets fascinated seeing the life style of Americans. Her only companion is television and she loves watching it. 'Dimple liked having the living room to herself. She kept on watching TV all day and did odd jobs like cleaning windows and vacuuming'(72). She watches soap operas and gets addicted to American life style. In the words of Sharamani Gabriel, "Mukherjee's expatriates are largely a creature of loss, living a life of cultural depletion and estrangement"(75)

Another factor which arouses their violence is that they were treated like child by their husbands. Maya becomes emotionally and sexually dissatisfied immediately after her marriage whereas Dimple's feeling intensifies more in the hostile land. Desperate of love and

care, both develops a sort of neurotic disorder. Anita and Bharati's flavor of Hindu mythology is prevalent when Maya thinks her life to be like romantic Radhe and Krishna, meanwhile Dimple ponders herself as the image of Sita before her marriage. Both in the course of the novel craves for a company. In the dread of loneliness, Maya utters: "Torture, guilt, dread, imprisonment – these were the four walls of my private hell, one that no one could survive in long. Death was certain." (88). As the critic NR Gopal opines in *A Critical Study of The Novels of Anita Desai* that 'Anita Desai not only explores the human psyche of the common woman but also of the subnormal bordering on abnormal woman' (21)

The thought of murder strikes in them. Primarily Maya and Dimple thinks about their suicide plans. Dimple's expertise in the ways to commit suicide reveals her psychic trauma. For Maya, the cry of peacock acts as an imagery increasing her sense of insanity. The latter is aware that peacocks enjoy their lives to the maximum before their death. "Peacocks are wise. Living they are aware of death, dying they are in love with life" (83). Both the characters due to their isolation start hating their husbands. Maya gets disgusted when Gautama cannot distinguish between the fragrance of petunias and line blossoms. In Dimple's case she starts screaming on her husband, "Leave me alone! at the doors of other apartments, at the incinerator, at the saurashtra doll in the hall .. she shouted in the bathroom" (179).

Both the novel ends in a gothic mode. In the concluding pages, Maya appears to be in the fury of rebellion. She starts hating the sight of Gautama and she feels horror around her in the form of lizards and other insects creeping on her. She turns hysteric over the concept of death, "Am I gone insane? Father: Brother: Husband: Who is my saviour? I am in need of one. I am dying, and I am dying. God, let me sleep, forget, rest. But no, I'll never sleep, again. There is no rest any more—only death and waiting" (98). In the midst, she ponders on albino's prophecy that either she or Gautama should die and decides that the victim

should be Gautama as he is always passive. On the crucial day noon, she asks Gautama to accompany her in order to enjoy the pleasant air. Perfect imbalance of mind is beautifully portrayed by the author in the inclusion of Shiv tandav i.e., cosmic dance of God Shiv. In a state of dilemma, she pushes her husband Gautama from the terrace giving vent to her feelings. Madhusudhan Prasad as an editor in Jasbir Jain's book observes that 'Desai explores the turbulent emotional world of the neurotic protagonist Maya, who smarts under an acute alienation, stemming from marital discord and verges on a curious insanity'.(3)

Whereas Dimple in the catastrophe like Maya dislikes her husband. On comparison, the death of Amit is more horrifying than Gautama. Dimple in the concluding page hates the sight of Amit spilling sugar in the kitchen slab. She gets irritated by the very sight of sugar spilling and decides it is difficult to tolerate with him further. The writer has beautifully pictured the concluding dark scene making the readers get petrified. As Amit starts swallowing the cereal, 'she brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice seven times, each little time harder, until the milk in the bowl of the cereal was pretty pink'(212). Sadistic Dimple is projected when she utters that the knife is redder than it had been when she chops chicken and mutton. As Bradley Edwards comments in his work, *Conversations with Bharati Mukherjee*: 'the introvert qualities of the protagonist along with its horrifying impacts are presented in unflinching manner by Mukherjee'. (24).

In the end of the novel both the characters face emotional trauma and dilemma. The authors provided unleashed visual imagery of the incidents in the plot. Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee synergizes in the concept of depicting female psyche when women are prone to estrangement, hostility, anguish and separation. Dimple and Maya, though they are brought up in a conservative, loving and petted ambience, after their marriage they are unable to come out from their shells due to expectations. If they would have got their love and encouragement from their husbands, their lives would be different, but they didn't.

Bharati Mukherjee concentrates her plot on Asian woman, who faces cultural change and take risks whereas Anita Desai tries to portray the emotion of woman. Holistically both the novels reveals the plight of woman in quintessential manner encompassing the happenings of real life situations .

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